



Bridger Bugler

F O R T B R I D G E R S T A T E H I S T O R I C S I T E

Superintendent's Desk



Fort Bridger State
Historic Site
Superintendent
Linley Mayer

Happy New Year!

We enjoyed having to be creative in order to still offer many of our events and we appreciate everyone's support, but we are glad it is finally a new year. We know that things will still be different, but we are looking ahead and planning for this summer with great excitement.

We have a lot of interpretive opportunities we hope to offer this year including several 20 min programs and Behind The Glass tours. We would love to have volunteers present historic skills. Please contact the fort if you are interested in presenting a skill so that you can show us your expertise.

Don't forget that we have snowshoes for rent in the museum which is a great way to get outside, see the fort, and soak in the sunshine.

We can't wait to see you at the fort this year!

Dispatch from the District

Greetings!

I hope everyone had a great holiday break. Obviously we have had a strange year, but all of you have done an amazing job in spite of the setbacks. This is certainly not going to go back to "normal" in the near future, but as long as we all continue to maintain the positive attitude you all have exhibited during this time, Fort Bridger is destined to succeed! I have been very impressed and proud of the work you all are doing at the fort and look forward to what we can all accomplish together in the future. Be it new training opportunities, restoration projects, adapting and modifying the visitor experience, and the great events you all put on, you have continued to maintain quality for your visitors. Thank you for all of your hard work and continued dedication!

Here's to a much better 2021!

Kyle Bernis, Shoshone District Manager

A POINT IN TIME

BY: MARTIN LAMMERS

‘Robertson’ – the name is fairly well known to locals and those familiar to Southwestern Wyoming history, but just who was ‘Robertson’, and what connection does the name have with Ft Bridger and western history?

The ‘Robertson’ we know is actually John Robertson. In an account given to newspaperman Matthew Field in 1843, Robertson mentions being born in North Carolina in 1805, and came with his parents to Saint Louis at the age of 11. Little is known of his early life, but the penmanship and syntax of Robertson’s letters-home from the Rocky Mountains indicate a better than average education.



Earliest known photograph of
John Robertson.
University of Wyoming Collection

In 1831 he joined a trading expedition and traveled to Santa Fe with Thomas Fitzpatrick, David Jackson, and William Sublette. While on the way one of the independent traders, and one of the greatest names in Western history, Jedediah Smith, was killed by Comanche Indians. Robertson was likely to have been one of the last Americans to see Smith alive.

Robertson became a trapper and was at the Rendezvous of 1832, perhaps the largest and most momentous of the entire era. Nearing the end of the Rendezvous, Robertson participated in a battle with a group of Gros Ventre Indians. In an account to Matthew Field, Robertson mentions being close enough to the fight that he was *‘shot through the shirt just over the heart’*.

Between 1833 and 1839, John Robertson – now known principally as ‘Jack Robinson’ – trapped from Montana to Southern Arizona, attended most Rendezvous, and became close acquaintances of Joe Meek, ‘Kit’ Carson, James Bridger, John Hawkins (Hawken), Tom Fitzpatrick, William Drummond Stewart, Joseph Rutherford Walker and many others. He was said to have been well-liked by everyone. In 1839, Robertson moved to Fort Davy Crockett (Fort Misery to some) at Brown’s Hole (Brown’s Park) near the Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado border. Thomas Farnham, while traveling with others through the area, describes Robertson’s trading situation in a style recognizable today. Working out of a skin lodge, and with buffalo robes on the ground as his counter, “Robinson” sold : *“Wares, knives, hatchets, lead, fishhooks, whisky were the articles of trade for which he took in beaver skins from trappers, money from travelers, and horses from the Indians.”*

A Point In Time Continued

After Fort Davy Crockett ‘broke up’ in 1840, Robertson went to Fort Uinta (Fort Winty) in the Uinta Basin and in early 1841 moved around the West eventually coming to the Black’s Fork area. By 1843 (or slightly earlier), Robertson was settled more or less permanently nearby to the newly established Fort Bridger. In 1843, he helped chase a group of Cheyenne who had raided a Shoshone village near Fort Bridger, killed some people, and stole an entire horse herd. Also in 1843, he attended William Drummond Stewart’s ‘Rendezvous’ near Stewart Lake (modern Fremont Lake) near Pinedale, Wyoming. Here he met and spoke at length with newspaperman Matthew Field. Robertson’s lodge, according to Field, was said to be the center of entertainment and was dubbed the ‘*St. Charles Hotel*’; and Robertson’s native-born wife was mentioned as the most grand and resplendent lady of the entire camp.

Having taken residence near Fort Bridger, Robertson kept cattle and horses but always made room for his Indian friends and relatives to visit and stay as long as they liked. John Robertson could be said to be one of Wyoming’s earliest ranchers. Bill Hickman, early LDS settler at Fort Supply, said it was “*well to cultivate the graces of Robertson*”, and that Robertson was helpful in getting the early colony started.

After the military’s arrival Robertson aided the U. S. Army as well. Robertson was the chief interpreter for the 1863 Fort Bridger Treaty. No mention can be found of his participation in the 1868 Fort Bridger Treaty, but it’s difficult to imagine that Robertson was not involved in some manner. He was friends with William Carter and one account mentions that Robertson could often be found at Carter’s store regaling everyone with stories and frontier advice.

John Robertson died in 1882, and according to early area historian Elizabeth Stone, who interviewed people who had known him, the Commanding Officer had a coffin made and burial was in the post cemetery. The funeral was said to have been largely attended, for Robertson had won many friends over his lifetime. It was in the 1930’s that he and the Carter family were moved to their present resting places on the Fort Bridger grounds.

Perhaps the final word should go to John Robertson himself. When asked by Matthew Field about his philosophy of life Robertson said simply: “*I should like to see the man to make me do what I don’t want to – that’s all I live for.*”

Prairie and Mountain Sketches by Matthew C. Field, edited by Kate L. Gregg and J.F. McDermott, University of Oklahoma Press, 1957.

Thomas J Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, printed in R.G. Thwaites *Early Western Travels*, Cleveland, 1906.

William Hickman as quoted in J. Cecil Alter, *James Bridger: Trapper, Frontiersman, Scout and Guide*, Salt Lake City, 1925.

A.D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, Hartford Connecticut, 1869.

Elizabeth A. Stone, *Uinta County, its Place in History*, Laramie, 1924

*One problem with following Robertson’s life concerns his name – or names. Robertson was variously known as ‘Jack Robinson’, ‘John Robinson’, or just ‘Robinson’ in fur trade records. It isn’t always possible to tell for sure if these are references to ‘John Robertson’. At times he referred to himself as ‘Jack’ and later in

HIKING THE OREGON TRAIL TODAY

By: Anjoli Mosier,

Fort Bridger State Historic Site Administrative Assistant

If you happen to work at a historic site or state park, the chances are probably fairly high that you have a passion for history or nature... or, if you are like me, both. So, when one day you are enjoying your workday and a lovely coworker mentions that she had a visitor who was looking for someone who sounded a lot like me who may be interested in section hiking the Oregon Trail with her you waste absolutely no time whatsoever in jumping at that opportunity.

When Janice Kennah and I met and had realized I had visited with her on one of her prior visits to the park and at that time had had a lovely discussion, we were instantly more at ease at the prospect of hiking together, and by the end of that second meeting our plans were set. 10 days later we began our first section of the Oregon Trail (OT). About once a month since then, Jan and I set out for an adventure along the Oregon Trail. In the warmer months we camp out on trail overnight and try to log around 20 miles over a two day sojourn, but in the winter we keep it to day hikes as work, weather and parenting permit. Thus far we have logged roughly 71 miles of Wyoming's OT. Ultimately we want to walk all of the OT across the entire state.

Our most recent adventure took us right outside of Granger walking west along a section of the trail that became a frontage road for mine and oil field work. The day dawned frigidly cold, but as no snow was predicted until late afternoon we donned some of our cold weather gear and set out for our anticipated 10 mile hike.

I admit when I woke up that morning I had every wish to stay in bed. For a few days beforehand I kept thinking to myself how cold it would be and how nice it would be to stay at home in a blanket watching movies and crocheting with my pups. I even reached for my phone to tell her I thought it may just be too cold to go hike that day. And then I had another thought... the people who came before us and settled this whole side of the country did not have the luxury of waking up on a cold winter morning and just staying in bed. If they were actually coming to settle here they had to get to where they were going or they would die. The soldiers who were ordered to march the exact same path we were walking that morning did not get the option to turn down that march as orders are orders. And they also didn't have the kind of conveniences we have for hiking today. So, although I have thermal hiking clothes and some better gear than I wore out that day, I decided my experience that morning would be much more like those who traveled that road before me so that I could sit in my warm home in the valley they settled. I was geared enough to be safe, but otherwise, I went ready to experience a mere fraction of what they may have gone through on that trail so long ago.



Anjoli Mosier after walking the
Oregon trail.

HIKING THE OREGON TRAIL TODAY CONT.

I believe that morning as we left town it was a balmy 8 degrees. By the time we set out on trail it was up to 18 - a veritable heat wave. I jumped around a lot as we set out trying to get the warmth moving. The first 4 miles passed within a blink of an eye. The sun came out and it got up to about the mid 20's. We slowed our pace as we began to get a bit more comfortable. As I always tend to walk much slower than my lovely hiking buddy she decided to pick up her pace a bit before much time had passed, and we each enjoyed the day as we saw fit... her feeling the burn and me dancing along behind bringing up the rear.

As a storm was predicted for later we had multiple offers of rides or sincere concerns as to broken down vehicles that would bring two wayward women out walking in the middle of nowhere on a day such as that, but no, we just find joy in it. We check in with each other regularly as we walk and on her last check in Jan reminded me I hadn't eaten in a while, which is a big issue for me. I told her I felt fine and I'd eat in a while - the clouds were making me nervous and I wanted to make some time. She said ok and continued her pace well ahead of me.

We were coming up on the butte, my car parked just beyond when the wind picked up, the sun hid... and my blood sugar dropped. I pulled my gloves off just long enough to take my pack off and dig out any snack I could reach first, bringing out some cheese that my hands were shaking too much to open for what seemed an endless amount of time. I did at length manage to rip open the cheese, but by then my hands had a mind of their own and I couldn't get my gloves back on. I stood shaking and shivering, while taking stock of my predicament. I could see my car but right then it may as well have been 500 miles away instead of just barely over a mile. I took stock of my surroundings, trying to figure out if there was anything closer where I could take shelter and have a short respite from the biting wind long enough to regain the use of my limbs long enough to reach my destination.

I imagined that the pioneers would have taken shelter in the wagons or started fires in this situation. I wondered how the people with only hand carts would have fared. Would the soldiers have been able to stop and find a way to warm themselves, or would they have marched on falling one by one to the bitter cold? The last vehicle drove up just then, bringing me out of my reverie and offered me a ride to my car, which this time, as he was someone I recognized and I realized I had learned what I had wanted to from this walk, I accepted. He gave me a ride to my car and learned about what we were doing, and I feel sure he will talk about it to people he comes across for years to come... as I am sure they did in such situations around fires back when the country was first being settled.

We stopped and offered Jan a ride too, yet she refused, bless her, and she made it her whole 10 miles. As for myself, next time a bit more prepared with warmer accoutrements, I intend to walk that 1.2 miles I missed the last trek and do my other 10 beyond that to learn whatever else I can glean about the people who trod where we do... all along the Oregon Trail.



Aunt Agony's Advice

Advice for men and women in the Victorian era (1837-1901) taken from *The Essential Handbook of Victorian Etiquette*.

Conduct Of A Lady Upon The Street

A lady should always conduct herself properly and graciously in public. To avoid ruining your reputation and disgracing yourself here are a few simple rules to follow while in public.



- A lady should always have the escort of a gentleman in the evenings.
- To avoid appearing ungraceful and unbecoming, she shall avoid rapidly walking upon the pavement.
- A lady who allows her dress to trail upon the street will call forth criticism and contempt from sensible people.
- A lady should never swing her arms while walking, eating upon the street, sucking parasol handles, pushing violently through the crowd, talking or laughing loudly or whispering in public.
- Should a lady have the need to cross the street, she shall always raise her dress with her right hand, but only a little above her ankle. To raise her dress with two hands is vulgar and should only be done when the mud is very deep.
- To stare at people, spit, look back after you pass, salute people across the street, call out loudly or laugh at people are all evidence of ill breeding
- A lady shall go quietly and unobtrusively about her business, so as to never seek to attract the attention of the opposite sex

If you shall follow these simple rules, you will forever be seen as a gracious and lovely lady.

Hill, Thomas E. *The Essential Handbook of Victorian Etiquette*. California: Bluewood Books, 1994. p. 53-54

Calendar

- **January-April 30- Winter Season**

Grounds open daily 9-dusk, (Admission is still required to walk the grounds)

Museum open Fri-Sun 9-5

Admissions: \$4 per resident, \$8 per non-resident, 17 and under free.

Snowshoes in all sizes for rent at the museum- \$5 age 18+, \$3 age 17 and under

- **January 1– First Day Hike**

1 pm– Free

Take in history, scenery, and make new friends as you walk one mile around the site with refreshments to follow.

- **April 3– Easter Egg Hunt**

10 am– Free

Take your pictures with a silly bunny and hunt for eggs. Sponsored by the Mountain View Lion's Club.

- **May 1– Summer Season Begins**

Grounds open daily 9-dusk, (Admission is still required to walk the grounds)

All historic buildings and museum open 9-5

Admissions: \$4 per resident, \$8 per non-resident, 17 and under free.

- **May 31– Memorial Day Flag Raising Ceremony**

8am– Free for the ceremony

We remember those who lost their lives serving our country through a Flag Raising Ceremony conducted at the flag pole by volunteers from the American Legion and VFW. The ceremony includes a 21-gun salute and taps.

*Events are subject to change.

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**Improving Communities
and
Enriching Lives**



Fort Bridger's mission is to protect, preserve, and promote Fort Bridger State Historic Site while providing educational and interpretive opportunities for the citizens of Wyoming and visitors from around the nation and the world.



Become a Member

Become a Fort Bridger Historical Association or
Fort Bridger Rendezvous Association member today!



Fort Bridger Historical Association Mission:

The Fort Bridger Historical Association is a non-profit organization whose function is to promote, support, and preserve the Fort Bridger State Historic Site.

Yearly membership is \$50 and includes a membership in the Wyoming State Historical Society.

For more information or to join call 307-782-3842 or e-mail FBHA1843@gmail.com

Fort Bridger Rendezvous Association Mission:

The Fort Bridger Rendezvous Association is a non-profit organization to promote, educate, and re-live the history, culture and life ways of the Fur Trade Era of the American West 1790-1840.

Yearly membership is \$20.

For more information or to join visit fortbridgerrendezvous.net, call 801-635-4038, or e-mail FBRAINCA@hotmail.com